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C O N F I D E N T I A L ABUJA 001862

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [LI](#) [NI](#) [ECOWAS](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA:LIBERIA DEMARCHE DELIVERED TO ECOWAS

REF: STATE 180464

Classified By: Ambassador John Campbell for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d).

1. (C) Summary. Despite sensitivities about the need in principle to support the legal structures of Liberia, the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS agreed with U.S. concerns about the Liberian Supreme Court rulings. He said that the U.S. and ECOWAS share a common position on how to respond to those decisions and the necessity for Liberian elections to take place on schedule and according to accepted practices. The legal department of ECOWAS has advised Chambas not to abide by the rulings, which, in its view, are not consistent with the court's mandate. ECOWAS will issue a public statement to this effect on September 29, and hopes to have this position affirmed by the ECOWAS Heads of State on the 30th. ECOWAS will authorize NEC to continue preparing for elections on October 11 and CPA Mediator Abubakar will arrive in Liberia on October 5 (or earlier if necessary) in anticipation of the election being held on schedule. End Summary.

2. (U) The Ambassador delivered reftel points to Dr. Mohammed ibn Chambas, the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS on September 29. Also present were General Cheick Oumar Diarra, the Deputy Executive Secretary for Political Affairs, Defense, and Security; PolMilOff; and an ECOWAS notetaker. The points were left with both Chambas and Diarra as a nonpaper.

3. (C) Chambas opened by saying he and ECOWAS are "very concerned" about the situation in Liberia. Just before meeting the Ambassador, he had a meeting with CPA Mediator Abubakar. Chambas wished "the court had been more responsible" with its verdict considering the "peculiar circumstances" of Liberia. He said the ECOWAS legal department had reviewed the verdict and determined that it should not be allowed to stand as it undermines the CPA, from which the court derives its authority. After reviewing reftel points, he said he was pleased to see that ECOWAS and the U.S. have "a common position." Chambas added that the Chairman of the NTGL was in Abuja on September 27 to discuss the same issue with President Obasanjo.

4. (C) Chambas said that ECOWAS will issue a public statement on September 29 rejecting the Liberian Supreme Court rulings and calling for Liberian elections to be held as scheduled on October 11 (Note: Post will fax the statement to AF/W once it is received. End Note). Chambas said the ECOWAS Heads of State meeting in Abuja on September 30 would be asked to endorse the statement ECOWAS will issue September 29. ECOWAS will authorize NEC to continue their preparations for an October 11 election. Abubakar is currently scheduled to arrive in Liberia on October 5, though if the situation warrants, he could arrive as early as October 3.

5. (C) Chambas was pleased to hear that U.S. Ambassadors to ECOWAS member states were delivering the same message in their capitals. He felt that it would be helpful to ECOWAS to have all of the Heads of State coming into Friday's Summit "with the U.S. position in their heads." Though the Summit will be a closed-door event, Chambas has agreed to allow PolMilOff to remain on the margins of the event.

6. (C) Comment. Chambas is firmly committed to holding elections on schedule, in accordance with the CPA, and sees this as a high priority. Chambas has, in fact, been prepared for some sort of stalling tactic by the NTGL for some time, and has consistently said that elections must occur on schedule. End comment.

CAMPBELL